

THE CHRONICLE

of Higher Education

ProfHacker

Home News Technology ProfHacker



Previous ← The ProfHacker Week in Review	Next Secure Communication with Public-Key Encryption →
---	---

Six Steps for Checking Your Facebook Privacy

February 7, 2011, 8:00 am

By Brian Croxall



Last semester, I began teaching a new workshop in Emory's library called "[Facebook, Privacy, and Online Identity](#)." The goal of the workshop was to help students become aware of how much they share on Facebook and to help them make conscious decisions about what they *would* share. I know that students, as well as almost everyone on the planet, have become more aware of The Social Network's privacy issues due their policy changes in late 2009 and early 2010, as well as the media coverage that these changes drew. For this reason, I expected that the workshops would draw a large number of students. I was wrong. Over a total of four workshops, I had a total of four students come through.

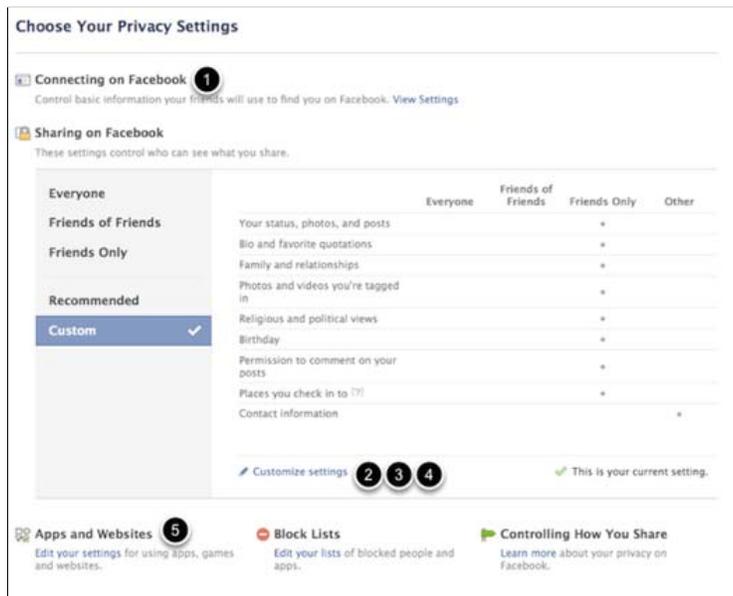
I'm working on doing better marketing for this semester's workshops, but I was pleased to see that all four of the students who attended the workshops were flabbergasted at how much information they had been allowing others to see about them. Each of them believed that they had locked their profiles down to make it impossible for a stranger to see anything about them. By the end of the workshop they had modified their privacy settings to produce the results they wanted, and we had covered concepts such as who's in a "network" and what a "friend of a friend" is, two topics the students, it became apparent, didn't really understand.

Here at ProfHacker, Julie has written previously about managing Facebook privacy settings ([round one](#) and [round two](#)). On a related topic, don't miss Mark's recent post about [archiving your Facebook data](#).) Unfortunately, Facebook changes its interface on a semi-regular basis, so I thought it might prove useful to share the six steps I walk students through to help them check the various places where Facebook has tucked its different privacy settings. And yes, you read that correctly: **there are six different steps for locking down your Facebook privacy settings.**

Steps 1-5

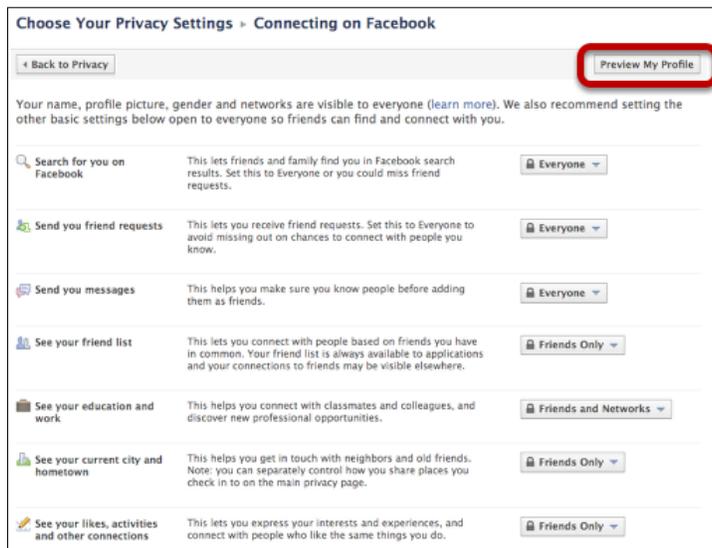


You'll find the first five steps under "Privacy Settings" in the upper right corner's "Account" menu.



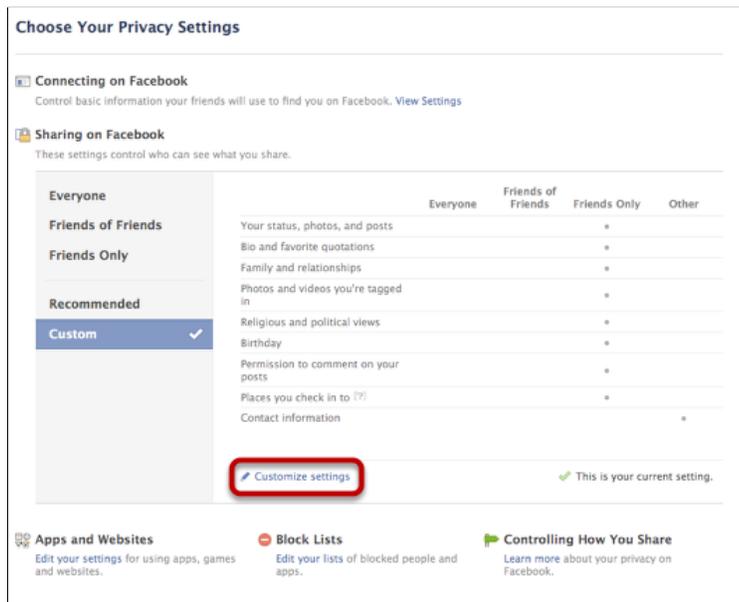
Here are the first five places where we'll be locking down settings.

Step 1: "Connecting on Facebook" settings



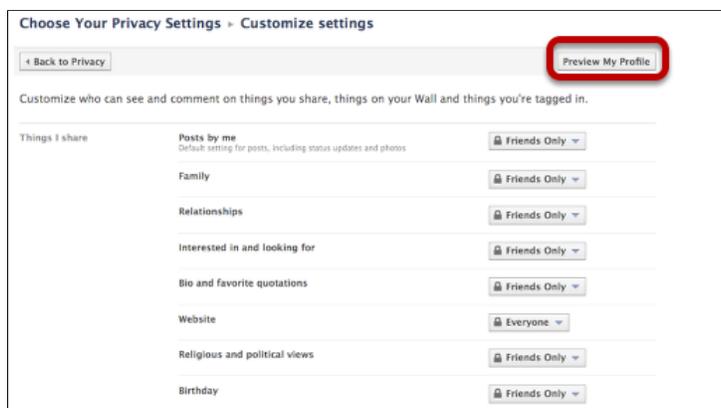
On this screen, you can choose who can find your account when searching on Facebook, who can send you friend requests, and more. You might, for example, consider whether or not you want those who you have not friended being able to see your friend list. Clicking on the "Preview My Profile" button allows you to see what your Facebook profile page looks like to general Facebook user whom you haven't friended *or* how it looks to particular friends. After you've got these settings as you'd like them and checked them in the preview, click "Back to Privacy" to return to the previous menu.

Where Steps 2, 3, and 4 live



Facebook provides users with several different presets under the “Sharing on Facebook” menu under “Privacy settings”: Everyone, Friends of Friends, Friends Only, and Recommended. These all work, of course, but choosing to “customize settings” will give you the most control and is where we’ll tackle steps 2, 3, and 4.

Step 2: Sharing on Facebook > Customize Settings

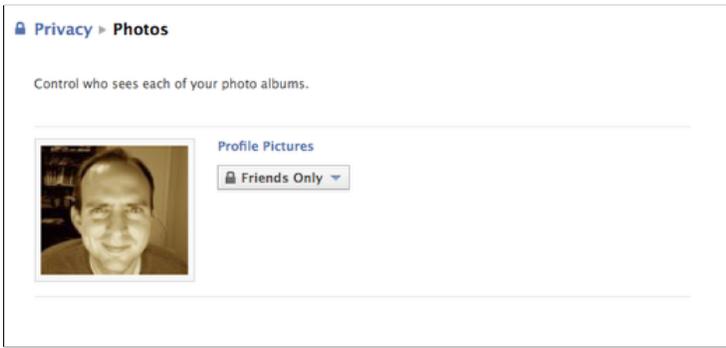


There are many different options for setting privacy under this “Customize settings” menu—many more than this image shows. Go through each of the options and choose what details about yourself you would like others to see. Again, you have the opportunity to preview how your choices affect how others see your profile.

Step 3: Edit Album Privacy

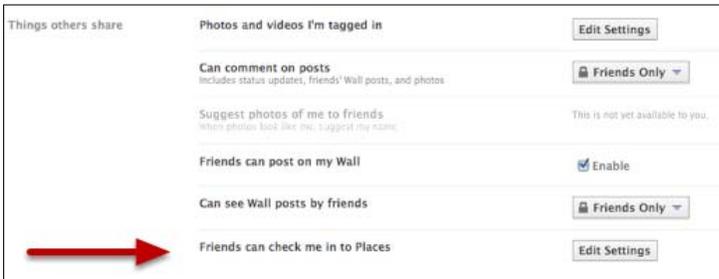


On the same screen as Step 2, you’ll want to click on “Edit album privacy” for Step 3. That’s right: Facebook has buried a privacy setting within *another* privacy setting.

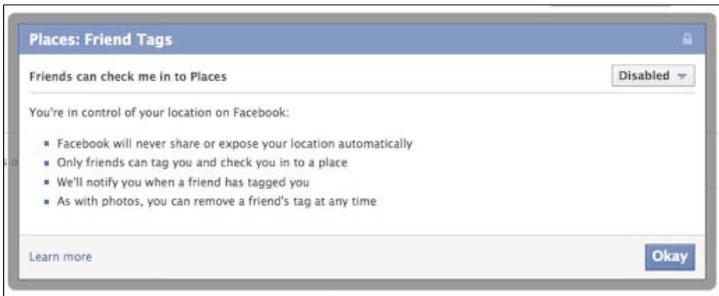


Once you've clicked on "Edit album privacy," you'll be able to set permissions on each of your photo albums. It's worth noting that I only have one photo album; if I had more, I'd be able to set permissions for each album individually.

Step 4: Editing "Places" Settings

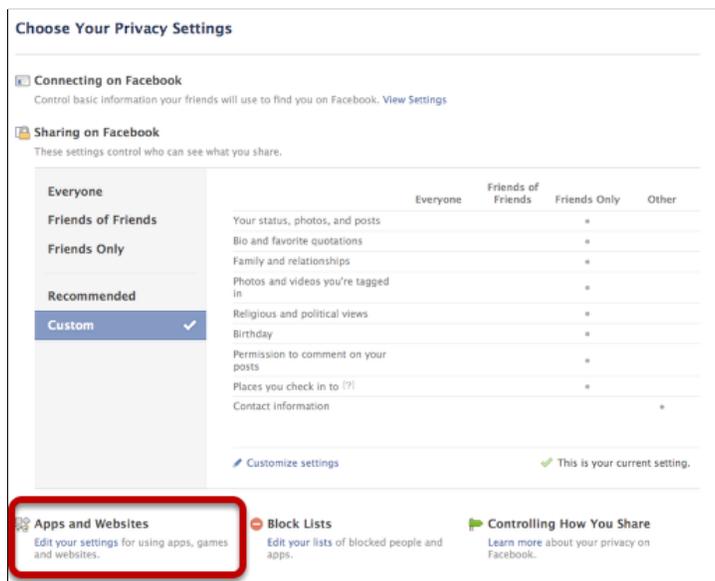


After finishing with your photo privacy settings, go back to the "customize settings" screen (from Step 2). Scroll down further to edit who can "check you into Places." Yes, Step 4 is *another* buried setting.

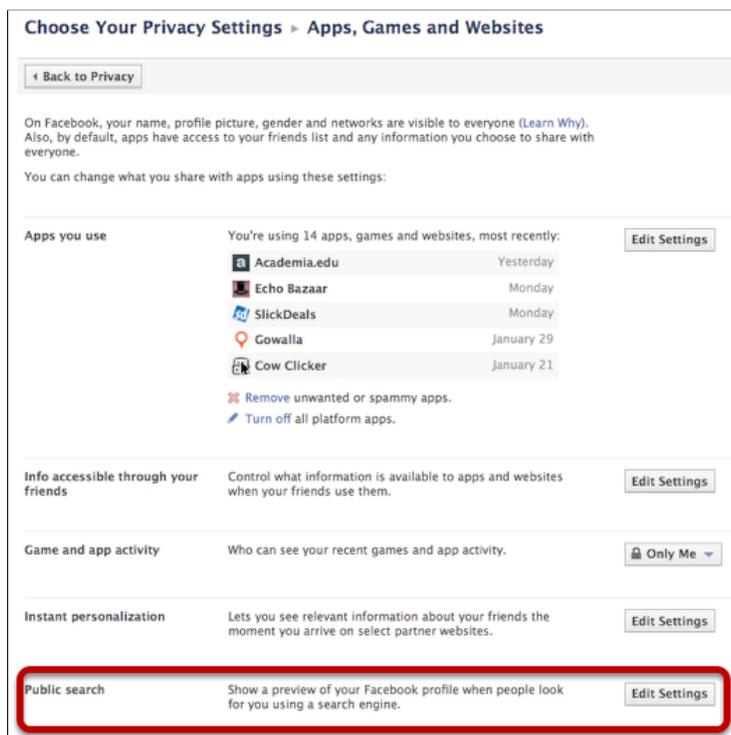


Clicking on the "Edit Settings" for Places generates a pop-up window, in which you can choose to enable or disable the ability of your friends to check you into Places on Facebook. (Just imagine the horror if someone were to check you into a Monster Truck Rally without your consent.)

Step 5: Apps and Websites



Now that you've finished steps 2-4, go back to the main Privacy Settings menu. Even though "Apps and Websites" is on this menu, its title and description might not lead you to think that it would have privacy settings. It does, and that's where Step 5 is.

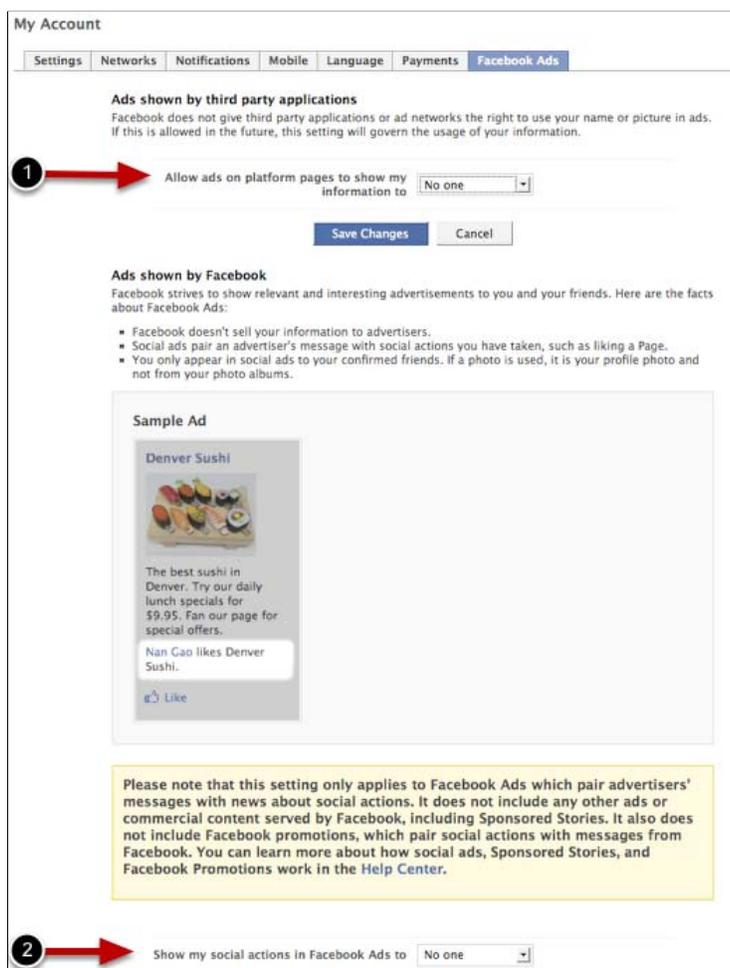


On this page, you can choose which apps can access your account, determine who can see your recent games and app activity, control instant personalization, and—perhaps most important for tailoring your web presence—decide whether or not your Facebook profile will show up in the results of something like Google.

Step 6: Facebook ads



Unfortunately, not all of Facebook's privacy settings actually live under the Privacy Settings menu. For Step 6, you need to choose "Account Settings" under the upper right corner's "Account" menu.



Under the "Account Settings" menu, you should choose the last tab, "Facebook ads." There are two settings to consider here, including one that governs what might be a future option for Facebook (!?).

Wrapping Up

So that's it. With these six steps you've had a chance to consider what information you want to be accessible to others on Facebook. As you might be able to tell from looking at the above images, I've chosen to make my Facebook activities very private. But that's just me. **What's your preferred setting for your Facebook privacy? Do you use the platform for personal or professional relationships?**

Finally, I'm more than willing to admit that I don't know everything about Facebook, so there's every chance in the world that I might have missed a privacy setting. **If you know of another setting to tweak, please let us know in the comments!**

[Lead image by Flickr user [opensourceway](#) / Creative Commons licensed]

This entry was posted in [Profession](#), [Software](#) and tagged [Facebook](#), [how to](#), [privacy](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

The Chronicle of Higher Education 1255 Twenty-Third St, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20037